

# *The Midland*

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NO. 10

## **Three Poems**

By H. H. BELLAMANN

How quiet was my sea,  
How still my boat!  
Leaning, I could smile  
Into my own unclouded eyes.

You passed:  
The tall masts of your ship  
Bent to higher winds than stirred  
These levels where my single sail  
Hung blossom-white  
Below the moon.

And now my frail boat  
Strains to a far horizon;  
The broken mirror of the sea is black  
And filled with whirling stars!

## THE GATE

This is the gate  
And that the hurrying throng  
Which you must join.  
Hold still and tight a moment,  
Let us look —  
These are your friends henceforth  
And I must know how you will fare  
Alone with them.

They are not sad;  
They do not seem to fear,  
Tho some look back  
With fingers to their lips  
As tho they saw above great ramparts  
Treetops of a well remembered garden  
Or a signal, blown like a scarf  
When faces fade in distance.

They are so many,  
You will be lost and jostled;  
You have never been alone.  
They are so many,  
And they hurry so —  
They dim and scatter like a mist —

I cannot see if you look back,  
If you are frightened,  
If you smile!

My scarf — oh, God,  
I wonder if you see! —

Like a flowing mist  
They fade and lose, —  
And are those purple gardens  
Whose great trees  
Wave in the tide of twilight winds,  
Or is it lift and roll  
Of illimitable sea?

## MOONLIGHT

I had listened overlong to music,  
And my lips were dumb  
From much remembering;  
But not the shining filigree of violins  
Nor moan of all the music in the world  
Could hurt me so —  
It was the moonlight on the lawn.

I can look on dawns more silver-still,  
On skies more charged with splendor,  
I can open all the doors of sense  
To all the witcheries of sound,  
Cloud-fires, — or silence;  
But I cannot look upon the lawn,  
Set like a tragic stage,  
With moonlight falling through the trees.

I had listened overlong to music  
And my soul, like a nun at prayer,  
Told the years —  
But that litany I know so well,  
It has no power to break my heart, —  
It was the moonlight hurt me so.

## Achievement

By JASPER BARNETT COWDIN

In one bright dream I saw the place  
That I would reach by God's good grace;  
The trees hung low with ripening fruit  
The hour I started the pursuit.

With splendor shone the magic gate,  
Beyond it, a divine estate,  
And over it a jeweled throng  
Of stately clouds that swept along.

But O the winding path I took  
Beside a wayward singing brook!  
It brought me to a mossy glade,  
And there my gipsy feet were stayed.

I seldom leave the quiet place  
That I have found by God's good grace;  
Here, sheltered from the sun's bold beams,  
Is a little pool of tender dreams.

## Drigsby's Universal Regulator

By HOWARD MUMFORD JONES

The professor of philosophy sighed and rose to put on his coat and hat, preparatory to going home. He had planned to spend the afternoon over a volume of Paulsen he had just purchased, but the fates had ruled that he must use a precious hour and a half in the filling in of various blank forms connected with his work in the university. The afternoon was now too far gone for Paulsen or anybody else.

The reports were on his desk. There was the absence card of the week which required that he copy out the names of all students absent from his classes, together with the day, and the class they had failed to attend; and the professor, being a conscientious man, had added the names of a few who were merely tardy. There were three cards "for the removal of conditions and incompletes" against the records of as many students who had now made their grades in last quarter's work. Besides these, there was a request from the chairman of his department for a copy of his class rolls, and since the professor could not afford a stenographer, and the state had neglected to furnish him one, he had tapped out the names with two fingers on his rebuilt typewriter. Some of the names were of foreign extraction, peculiarly obnoxious to the asthmatic machine he possessed.

These represented but one part of the pile. There were also two requests from an overworked committee of his colleagues for reports on his advisees, one of whom had gone on a trip with the basketball team without properly notifying the athletic committee, while a second had fallen, scholastically speaking, into the sere and yellow leaf. The professor sighed and wondered why he was responsible. He fingered the pile uncertainly. There was a request to various state boards and officials that he be allowed to journey to a neighboring city at an expense of \$8.40 to deliver a lecture for the extension department. The lecture, it was true, was a weekly affair, arranged for long in advance; but the board of regents inscrutably required a separate form for each journey, and when the professor had forgotten to fill it out on one occasion, he had suffered a reprimand from the terribly efficient business manager whom he disliked, and of whom he was secretly afraid.

But the crowning gem of the pile was a huge sheet from the president's office, waiting to be checked over and verified. This was called the Service Report. It contained rows of red spaces for women students, and of blue spaces for men students, and a set of oblong boxes at one end in which somebody had inserted the names of the professor's courses, together with much miscellaneous information of the kind dear to registrars. The whole had been written up by some clerk in a beautiful hand (something the professor theoretically approved); but the clerk had

unfortunately confused the professor's courses with some taught by a colleague, and the professor took little pleasure in the rows of neat figures in their blue and red sentry boxes. It was really quite a curious document. On the reverse side were spaces for the names of committees on which the professor served—a long roll—and a place for listing courses "announced and not given". This feature struck him as idiotic. But what irritated him more was a request at the bottom of the page that he list his needs as an instructor. The professor, having grown old and cynical, no longer bothered to fill in this space with the crowded lines of his ingenuous days, but the sight of that impersonal printed direction filled him with the old dumb resentment. He had left this report for tomorrow, for the light was failing and he was tired. Philosophy for the moment seemed of very little use.

A gentle knock sounded on the panel as he started for the door. Against his better judgment he called, "Come in!"

The door opened. A meek little man, wrapped in a huge overcoat and a purple and white muffler, sidled in. The professor switched on the lamp over his desk. The light only partially illumined a long coarse nose under a pair of vague and watery eyes, but it fell full on a shiny derby hat about a size too large, that apparently rested on a couple of sail-like ears. It showed, too, a straggling dirty-gray moustache and a thin, pointed chin.

"Yes?" inquired the professor of philosophy.

For answer the visitor gesticulated violently with his hands. Then he slithered away from the door and peered up into the professor's face.

"My office hours," began the professor gently, divided between curiosity and annoyance, "are from ten to eleven, when I shall be glad —"

"Yes, yes, I know." The man seemed to sigh rather than speak, and dropped dolefully into a chair. "But I thought it would be better to have just us two."

The professor decided he was annoyed, not curious. "I am sorry, but I had rather you came tomorrow."

"Oh don't! Don't say that," replied his visitor, whom this announcement had thrown into a species of gloom that required much wriggling of its body and contortions of its hands. "So many of the others have told me the same thing. It's my invention I came to see you about."

"But if it's anything mechanical, I'm helpless. Professor Calhoun is the one to see. You'll find him in the Engineering Building. I can give you his office number."

The creature wriggled again. "It's not — it's not mechanical," he confided in a gaspy burst. "It's a composite invention. It's a scheme for the improvement of universities. Drigsby's my name," he added unexpectedly.

The professor stared.

"Do sit down and let me tell you about it. You're a philosopher, sir, a philosopher. And a philosopher



is bound to be interested in the improvement of universities."

The argument was irresistible. The professor sat down.

"I see you've been working with reports," said the little man, struggling with his muffler. "They're — they're a great thing." He emerged from the conflict, panting and victorious.

The professor permitted himself a wry smile.

"It's reports I've come to see you about," began the other. "That is, it's reports in one sense, and in another it ain't. I've been a-studying this question, and I tell you that reports is a step in the right direction, but they don't go far enough." He had got his overcoat unbuttoned by now, and exhibited a much worn brown suit. "Now, professor," he said, leaning forward, "what would you say was the object of reports?" He cocked his head on one side.

The professor was always annoyed when any one called him by his unadorned title, but he manfully concealed the fact.

"Why, I should say," he said slowly, "that the object of these reports" — he touched the pile at his elbow — "was to systematize the machinery of the university. Not that they always succeed," he felt compelled to add.

"Exactly," returned Mr. Drigsby, leaning back. "They don't always succeed. And why, I ask you. Because a part of your institution is systematized, and a part of it ain't systematized. My invention, sir, is intended to remedy this defect."

"But —" the professor expostulated.

"I know exactly what you are going to say," interrupted Mr. Drigsby with an admiring air. "You were a-going to say that there's too many reports now. But follow my argument, professor. What is reports for? You say they're to systematize the institootion. And how do they do it? By regulating things, that's how. But when you do one thing one way, and another professor was to do the same thing a different way, would things be regulated? Look what would follow. In the first place, the pupils wouldn't all be educated alike. And the parents of those students — they wouldn't be satisfied if they didn't get the same kind of education all around. No, sir! Suppose you was to do something differently from what your students expected — ask them questions and change your courses so the students wouldn't know what to expect. Why, the people of this state wouldn't stand for it — to have you educating some students one way and another professor educating them another way. These students would write home and say that professor so-and-so was trying to do things different, and that they was flunked in consequence, and pretty quick you'd be getting indignant letters from citizens of this state asking what did you mean by this question, and how did you dare to fill up the children's minds with socialism.

"Professor, what we need is not less reports, but more of them. We've got to systematize everything."

"But surely the object of education is the — is the training of the student to think for himself," broke in the amazed philosopher.

The little man seemed hurt and flapped his big hands.

"Now, professor," he remonstrated, "you know them ideas of yours was all right twenty-five years ago. But this is an age of progress, sir, an age of progress, and what, I ask you, is necessary to progress?"

The professor was not equal to this.

"Why, professor, what are we doing with *all* our industries? Efficiency — standardization! That's the word — standardization! Look at the automobile industry — standardized parts! Look at the packing industry — everything standardized. Look at any of our big manufacturing plants — look at the army — everything standardized — men, output, everything!"

"But education isn't an industry," the professor interrupted. He wasn't going to be downed without a protest.

"It's all right so long as you're talking to a man like me," the little man said in a soothing tone. "I won't tell a word. But I wouldn't let them old ideas get out if I was you. The people won't stand it. We're a progressive nation, sir. Individualism is antiquated. We've got great factories for turning out automobiles, and we've got great colleges for turning out students, and there ain't a mite of difference between them that matters — no, sir, not a

mite. The educators are recognizing it themselves. They're progressing. Everybody is progressing. They've got up standardized tests for spelling and language and arithmetic — and I don't know what all they haven't got. I ain't a professional educator, professor, but look at these surveys of schools and colleges. What are they for? Standardization — efficiency! The people ain't going to stand for lost motions in education, and don't you forget it. Take this report here."

He reached for the service report on the professor's desk.

"Now, what's the idea behind this here report? Professor, you're a reasonable man, and you know as well as I do that it won't do to have one man teaching students more facts than another man. It won't do to have one man teach less students than somebody else. No sir! Teaching is only so much talking anyway, and you might as well talk to fifty students as to five. The time is coming, professor, when we'll abolish all courses that students don't elect up to a certain standard number — say, fifteen — and use you valuable men for other work."

The professor murmured, but what he said was indistinguishable.

"Look at this," his visitor announced, triumphantly tapping the report which he had been examining. "Office hours. That's very important. It ain't fair to the people of the state to employ two men without they keep the same office hours. No, sir! Professor, ten years from now when we get

everything standardized, it'll be like this: if a professor can't show a standard number of visitors to each office hour — say, ten an hour — why, we'll abolish the office, and save the state that much fuel and light. Efficiency, that's the word!"

The professor felt bound to admit that it was. His visitor was studying the service report. He looked up indignantly.

"Now you understand," he said in a grieved tone, "that there ain't nothing personal in what I'm going to say. I like you, professor, and you're a sensible man as will see the point. But here you've got one course — *Introduction to Philosophy* — with 31 students, and here's another course — *Elements of Kantianism* — with only five students!"

"But that's an advanced course," the professor explained.

"I don't know anything about that," his accuser retorted, "but anybody can see it ain't fair. Here, I'll show you."

He drew a much chewed pencil from an inner pocket.

"Let's suppose you draw a salary of \$5,000 a year."

The professor looked swiftly up, but the visitor was making figures with the utmost seriousness.

"Now, how many hours do you teach each week?" he asked.

"Twelve," answered the professor.

His visitor seemed shocked. "M-m-m. That's too bad. And a bright man like you, too. But I

dare say that'll all be changed soon. Twelve, you said? There's 36 weeks in a school year, or a total of 438 hours a year. So far as your value to the state is concerned, we may consider that the rest of your time is worthless."

The professor found no opportunity to combat this idea.

"In other words, you're worth eleven — four — one — about \$11.50 an hour to the state. Now you take this introductory course — 31 pupils — only one hour to go 'round. That means they're getting about 37 cents worth of education an hour from you. But over here is this other class. My, my! Five students — their instruction is costing the state \$2.30 apiece for one hour in your class. That's a big discrepancy, professor. If one o' *my* children was only getting 37 cents worth of instruction from you, and one of my neighbor's boys was getting \$2.30 worth, I'd want to know why. I'm a taxpayer, same as he is. That won't go in a democracy, I tell you. And if I was running this university, I'd see that this difference was levelled off."

Like many men engaged in theory, the professor was not quick at figures, and could find nothing to reply.

"And your invention," he said at length. "I take it, it's designed to meet just such a situation?"

"Yes, sir. Yes, sir. I said you was a bright man, professor, and there you've come straight to the point." He gave the professor's knee an approving pat.

"As I say, we've got to standardize. In a big manufacturing business they have what they call standardized parts, and we've got to have the same thing here. Courses have got to be levelled up to an average of efficiency to avoid putting out inferior products. Textbooks — lectures — hours of work — everything's got to be put into uniform lots. It's just like owning an automobile. If your machine is of standard make, and you break a piston-ring or lose some little screw, it don't make no difference whether you're in Maine or New Mexico; all you got to do is to drive to the nearest service station and replace the missing part. That's the ideal we're working toward! We've got to have it so that any student can go anywhere in the United States and fit right into the same class and the same subject whether he's from the University of Boston or the University of Arizona.

"Why," said the little man, really warming to his theme, "the time'll come when every freshman in the United States will be turning over the same page of the same textbook at the same hour! That's what we're coming to!"

The professor seemed duly impressed.

"Now that sort of work," continued the other in a confidential tone, "I can leave to the presidents and trustees and so on. That ain't the object of my invention. My work goes farther. For when they're through, and we get all the universities and colleges and schools to running on the system of standardized parts, what's the next step in advance?"

The listener stared blankly.

"We got to progress," said the other triumphantly. "Repose is stagnation. And when we've standardized the universities, the next thing we got to do is to standardize the professor!"

He fumbled in a capacious pocket of his overcoat, and drew forth, not without difficulty, an awkwardly shaped package. This he placed on the desk. After unwinding an untidy lot of string in which he became hopelessly entangled, the little man drew forth from its wrappings a curious instrument of steel and wire which the professor hastily examined. The machine was unlike anything he had ever seen before. It had a dial in front like the one on his furnace (for which he had a profound, if unintelligent, respect), a little gong like a bicycle bell, a kind of muzzle made out of wax, and a pendulum which, once released from the string, commenced to swing furiously back and forth until checked in a professional manner by its master. The professor also saw that the swinging of the pendulum caused a hand to move slowly across the face of the dial. His visitor spoke.

"Ain't she a little wonder?" he said admiringly. "I haven't got a good name for her yet, but I was thinking of calling it Drigsby's Little Universal Regulator for Schools and Colleges. Do you think that would go?"

"I can hardly say," answered the philosopher. "What is it's use?"

"Suppose we get our schools all standardized — same number in every class, same classes in every



school, same schools in every state. There would still remain one variable factor. How fast do you talk?"

This was so unexpected a query, and the little man's manner so like that of a person about to throw a bomb, that the professor could only stammer.

"I—I don't know!"

"Ah, that's it!" Mr. Drigsby extended an accusing forefinger. "Who does know? Nobody knows. That's one of the great facts of human nature, and until we can control it, all the standardization on earth ain't going to be successful. That's where my invention is going to revolutionize the educational world."

"I'm afraid I don't follow you," said the professor, knitting his brows.

"Sit down, professor, and I'll show you." The other's voice had the soothing quality of an insurance agent about to close a contract. "Now take this case. Here's Professor A and here's Professor B. Both get the same salaries and teach the same number of students, and so on. That looks fair, don't it? But suppose Professor A is one of these slow-spoken, solemn kind of men that say only about one word a minute, and keep you wondering if the next word's ever going to drop. And suppose Professor B is one of these quick, snappy, nervous fellows that talks like a human machine gun. Is the student getting the same amount of information out of Professor A that he is out of Professor B? I should say not. You can see for yourself that Pro-

fessor B is teaching him about twice as much as Professor A. Is that fair? And what about the state? The state ain't getting what it pays for; it's getting short-changed. You're a bright man, professor, and you'll have to admit that I'm describing to you a serious defect in our university system.

"Now, what are you going to do about it? Cut down the pay, you say?"

The professor looked startled, but Drigsby rumbled on.

"But if you cut down the pay, what becomes of your standardized salaries? We got to keep standardization at all costs. There's where my invention comes in — *it standardizes the professor!*"

"And how does it — work?" queried the university man with pardonable curiosity.

"I tackled the problem," the little man beamed at him, "and I said to myself: what we need is a standardized rate or speed in the lecture room. We got to have a standard lecture unit, and then we got to hold the professors to it. And so I figured and figured, and then I built this machine.

"This here," he said, pointing to the central figure on the dial, "is the standard unit rate of speed for lecturers — 348 syllables a minute. I got that by taking notes at lectures here in your university and averaging the results. Of course if the figure's too low, we can change it. And of course, later on, we can speed 'em up. Now, you put this on."

Mechanically the professor obeyed. Not without difficulty the universal regulator went over his head,

when he found himself breathing through the wire muzzle. Just before his lips was an opening into which he must speak, while before his eyes glared the dial, and under his chin hung the pendulum.

"Don't you be scared," said his mentor encouragingly. "It won't hurt you. All I want is to test you. Now you read this out loud to me just about as you usually talk."

The professor found a dog's-eared copy of the Declaration of Independence thrust into his hand. He began to read that immortal classic aloud, and as he read the pendulum commenced to tick in unison with his periods. It seemed to him that he had only begun — indeed he had scarcely gone beyond "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" — when the bell jangled, and a little arm shot out from the bottom of the machine and so tightened itself around his throat that he could neither speak nor breathe. Mr. Drigsby seemed delighted.

He unfastened the instrument and examined the dial. The philosopher gingerly fingered his Adam's apple. He was a little indignant and more than a little ruffled that the inventor had not warned him in advance how he was going to be choked. Mr. Drigsby's voice broke in upon these reflections.

"Now you see what you've been doing! You've been a liability to this instiutoon instead of a asset. You only did about 305 syllables — in other words you're below the unit rate for lecturers. You been losing money to this state steadily ever since you been here.

"Still, that ain't as bad as some," he conceded, "and you could be learned to go faster. The little universal regulator would soon teach you. You could practice with it at home."

"And it is your notion," said the professor coldly and emphatically, "that we —"

"The idea is double-barreled, professor. In a standardized university you can't have a lot of loafers, and neither can you have one or two hogs working away ahead of the average, and loafing later on. That won't do."

The professor rejoiced that at least he was not of the porcine persuasion.

"And just so here. That's where my little regulator comes in. With this here instrument, a college president or a board of trustees can test any of its professors any time. Those that talk too fast can be learned to go slow, and those that talk too slow can be learned to go faster, until everybody is talking at exactly the same rate. Then everything's fair, square, and above board. The state knows it's getting what it paid for, the students know just how much lecture to expect, and the professors know that they ain't undercutting one another in the classrooms. Equal pay, equal work, equal service."

"And new members of the faculty?" hazarded the instructor.

"They'd be tried out on the regulator. If they was too slow or too fast, they wouldn't be hired. But if they didn't vary much from the average, they could be kept on probation for two or three weeks

under instruction, and practiced up on the regulator until they got the swing of it.

"Of course under my plan, any professor would be liable to test at any time. He wouldn't know when the examiner might catch him, so he's got every incentive to keep in fighting trim. Consequently he'd always be lecturing at the regulation rate — 348 syllables a minute."

"There would remain, however, one other factor," said the professor reflectively, "the preparation of lectures, and the reading of books. I read, for instance, almost half again as rapidly as one of my colleagues."

"I been thinking along them very lines," responded Mr. Drigsby with obvious admiration, "and as soon as I can get at it, I'm going to add an optical attachment to the regulator — turn over so many pages an hour by means of a set of revolving arms. Of course, we can't make all these changes at once. They got to come gradual." He commenced tenderly to wrap up the invention.

The professor stared thoughtfully at the regulator, and fingered his throat. He wondered where the arm was concealed that had almost strangled him. A vision of the university of the future stole into his mind. He straightened up.

"Come over to the president's office," he said. "We'll talk it over."

## A Country Funeral

By FLORENCE KILPATRICK MIXTER

### I

#### THE HOUSE

The parlor shades  
Let in the unaccustomed day  
And, where the coffin stood  
A moment since,  
There is a pool of sunlight.  
Upstairs, a neighbor has come in  
To stay with Alice,  
The young wife,  
And help her with the baby,  
One week old today.

### II

#### THE PROCESSION

Three flivvers and a hearse;  
A long road winding through a sunlit  
pasture land;  
And this is all. . . .  
To prove that he is dead.

## III

## THE BURIAL

Father and Mother  
Stand beside his grave,  
As separate in their grief  
As in their hatred. . . .  
A voice intones  
"I am the Resurrection and the Life." . . .  
At her low cry  
He shifts a little nearer  
And the barrier of twenty years  
Is lifted for the time it takes the sun  
To steal from cloud to cloud.

## IV

## THE GRAVE

Dark boughs of evergreen,  
Fragrant as young, young love,  
Cover his heart.  
Soft winds,  
Like fingers of a child,  
Weave in and out among the boughs.  
The valley,  
Like a mother's arms,  
Enfolds him.  
But the mountains,  
Bleak, austere, and terrible, —  
These are a father's  
Inarticulate grief.

## **The Real Pachyderm**

By RICHARD BUTLER GLAENZER

God smiled to me from a stalk.  
My cane-tip slashed Him in two:  
I never knew.

A shell, He pricked my skin.  
I cast him into the sea. . . .  
Less certainly.

It took the ice of a wave,  
Backwash and undertow,  
To make me know.



